

P. Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo and Sanskrit grammar

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After Ludo Rocher published the *Dissertation on the Sanskrit language* in 1977, the work of Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo as a grammarian has not been studied by international scholarship. As Rocher pointed out, for several years the Discalced Carmelite had to pay for “his coarse, acrimonious and offensive way” in arguing with his contemporaries, and in particular with the members of the Asiatic Society. In spite of having been the author of the first Sanskrit grammar ever printed in Europe, Paulinus was soon forgotten by Western scholars who believed that his manual was a grammar of some vernacular language of South India. The translation, made by Rocher, of Paulinus’ *Dissertatio historico-critica* bore witness to the fact that the language studied by the Carmelite was pure Sanskrit, and that most of the inaccuracies in the transliteration of Sanskrit words were due to a typical pronunciation of South India. Nevertheless, Rocher had to limit himself to translating only the *Dissertatio*, which was the introduction to Paulinus’ first grammar, *Sidharūbam seu grammatica Samscrdamica*, published in 1790. He considered impracticable to achieve a complete translation of all Paulinus’ works, because they are written partly in Latin partly in Sanskrit, and Sanskrit words are transliterated partly in Grantha-Malayalam characters partly in Roman characters, following sometimes Italian pronunciation sometimes German. In Rocher’s opinion, Paulinus should be considered mainly a pivotal figure in the history of Indo-European comparative philology, thus his works as a grammarian should be studied as a set of source materials available to European scholars at the end of the 18th century.

An accurate work of exegesis of both Paulinus’ grammars, *Sidharūbam* and *Vyācarana seu locupletissima Samscrdamicae linguae institutio* (1804), offers the opportunity to study a peculiar grammatical tradition spread in the South of India, namely in Kerala where Paulinus settled from 1776 to 1789. In his preface to *Vyācarana* the Carmelite states that his work is the translation of an original Sanskrit grammar which was the *syntaxis* of the text of *Sidharūbam*. After the systematic collation of both Paulinus’ grammars, we may assume that by the word *syntaxis* the friar means ‘explication,’ hence *Vyākaraṇa* seems to be a sort of commentary of *Siddharūpa*, which was the verse text traditionally used by Brahmins from Kerala for teaching Sanskrit grammar. This assumption would explain the reason why Paulinus, when in Europe, decided to publish two Sanskrit grammars, the latter being the commentary of the former. Almost fifteen years after the publication of *Sidharūbam*, sternly criticized by the contemporaries because of its abstruseness, the Carmelite wrote his *Vyācarana* as a commentary text, referring to an original Indian grammar as an archetype. If we consider the grammatical terminology used by Paulinus and the declension patterns proposed by the friar, we should assume that *Siddharūpa* and *Vyākaraṇa* are minor texts of the Pāṇinian tradition, which spread locally in Kerala. Thus Paulinus’ works should be studied as a relevant witness to this tradition, and the Carmelite happens to play an important role in the history of Sanskrit grammar in Europe.